

## Why do Jaffna people shake their legs in sitting position?

By Dr. Harold Gunatillake-  
FRCS, MBBS, FIACS, FICS, AM (Sing)

*Fidgeting like shaking your legs can help you to lose weight- burn 350 cal. A day*

Sitting for more than six hours greatly increases your risk of a clot forming in your calf veins. No matter how much you exercise, eat well, avoid smoking,

excessive sitting will cause problems according to Tom Rath best-selling author of 'Eat Move Sleep' which is sold more than six million copies:

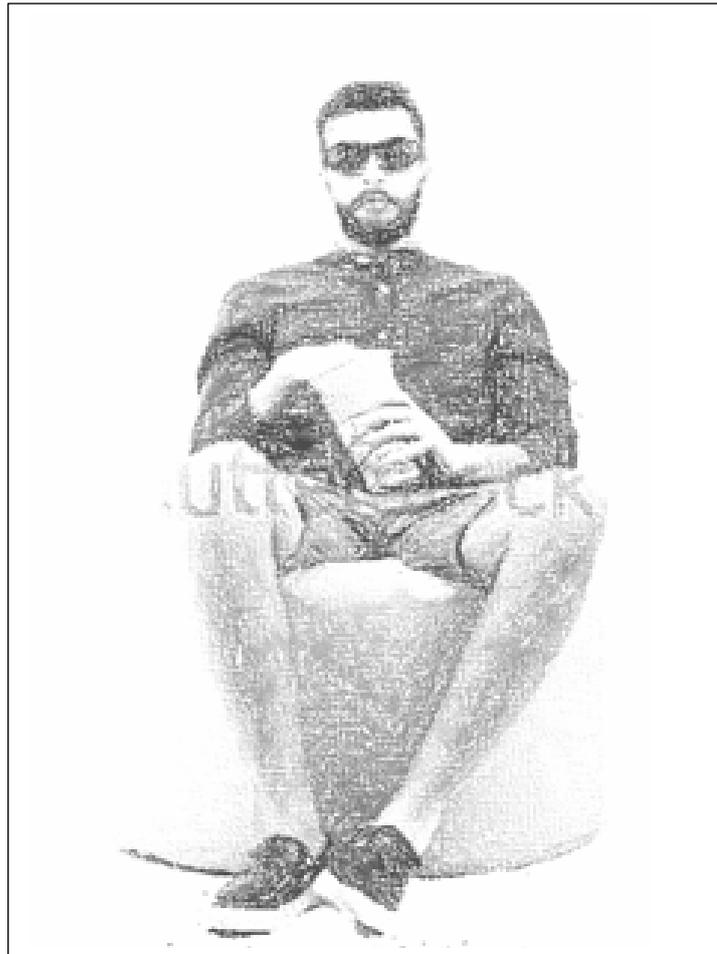
As soon as you sit down, electrical activity in your leg muscle shuts off! Enzyme production, which helps break down body fat, drops by 90 percent. After two hours of sitting, your good cholesterol drops by 20%. Continuous body motion, including fidgeting, is a healthy use of daily calories and keeps your weight down.

In the interesting new study in Australia, researchers recognized that excessive sitting time is associated with worse health. Shaking your legs whilst being seated, tend to improve your health.

You are aware travelling for many hours in a plane you are reminded of rotating your ankles frequently to avoid deep vein thrombosis on flights.

Furthermore, there are positive associations between cancer risk and sedentary behaviour.

Shaking your lower limbs vertically or from side inwards keeps the leg muscles active and calories are lost. Some, especially women tend to shake their feet cross legged while reading a book in bed.



You may lose more calories sitting down and shaking your legs continuously and rhythmically than walking.

You can now buy electrical shaking machines to do the same job. One issue with such machines is that the rhythmic motion of the foot plate tends to shake the feet and legs and may not improve circulation such as sending venous blood more rapidly towards the heart. Shaking your legs rhythmically functions better than the machine, as far as movement of the blood flow.

When you are in a nervous state you may unintentionally shake your legs, and that sends a message to everyone around you about your feelings of anxiety or irritation or being bored.

Shaking your legs isn't always a sign of boredom. Some people in the North of Sri Lanka, do it while they are concentrating on a task or problem. I have seen personally many Jaffna people shaking their legs unknowingly when engaged in serious auditing work.

Or for some people it is traditional to shake their legs -inwards and outwards whilst talking or just doing nothing. It is a perpetual habit, while some others do it subtle, situational tremor.

Most old people in Sinhalese homes in the rural areas while chewing beetle and relaxing on the reclining chair called the "Hansi putuwa" seem to shake their legs, like no other business, most relaxing and satisfying.

Shaking your legs is beneficial to your health, especially if your job is sitting down long hours, say at the computer.

Shaking your legs seems to increase blood flow significantly. So, if you are not a leg shaker, you should take a break, get up and walk every few hours.

In some cases, leg shaking goes beyond subconscious behaviour and may be a cause of underlying disease.

There is a condition called restless legs syndrome (RSL) which has no connection to the habit of shaking your legs. RSL, occurs more in bed when you sleep. It is a feeling to move your legs in order to alleviate crawling, itching, aching

Leg tremors are different to leg shaking. A person with leg tremors may notice their leg shaking while a muscle or group of muscles pulses or spasm out of control. This situation is common in multiple sclerosis, stroke, traumatic brain injury.

When your liver or kidney failure may also cause tremors.

So, shaking the legs as in the Jaffna tradition is a healthy movement. It is not considered obnoxious and being involuntary may not be able to control.

Jaffna man has strong wiry legs and leg shaking gives good blood flow, better skin health, may be considered a factor for strong healthy legs for walking long distances.

Strong healthy legs are linked with healthier brain aging. Their brain health has influenced them to study well and become professionals.

Now you know why Jaffna man is wiser